



Phone: 559-226-VOTE

Web site:
<http://fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Tuesday, November 25
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office



Wednesday, December 3
Transit Lunch & Learn
See flyer page 3

Sunday, December 7
Holiday Party
More info to follow



Fresno, Clovis Unified describe programs to support student mental health

by Murray Farber

MOU, ADH, IEP, SWSS, A to A. This may sound like a jumble contest and you have to form words. Actually, it’s no game for the psychologists and social workers who spoke at the League’s Lunch and Learn last month, the second in a series of forums dealing with mental health. This session focused on the varied programs, identified by a plethora of acronyms, designed to help pupils in the Fresno and Clovis Unified School Districts.

Four panelists from the two districts detailed the assortment of classes and services created to meet a lengthy list of problems that youngsters face. Just a few include depression, oppositional behavior, truancy, homelessness, anxiety, difficulties stemming from living in group or foster homes and autism. Some students will always need support and the reassurance of ongoing assistance in a safety valve environment, as noted by Sue Goldman, school psychologist currently working in the Clovis intervention programs. She added, “Bright students with emotional issues are often the most difficult to assist.”

Ginger Cook, another Clovis school psychologist, stressed the need to support schools and pupils through behavioral consultant teams. Currently a district behavior consultant for students who exhibit significant social, emotional or behavioral concerns, she commented, “We need many eyes on the problem.” She said that a student’s “behavior communicates a need. The student may actually know what to do but something is impeding access to the solution.”

She continued, “The student may need to learn new skills” and the staff has to learn the student’s strengths and weaknesses that need support. The children may need to develop social or organizational skills as early as pre-school in order to be ready for a classroom. “As we peel back their layers of behavior, we frequently find that anger produces challenging actions. We want to keep these kids in the classroom but the 30 others in the room have the right to learn.”

(Continued on page 9)

President's Message



For some time the League has been working with a coalition of groups dedicated to making life better for disadvantaged and underserved populations in Fresno and the outlying communities. We collaborated with them on SB375's Sustainable Communities Strategies design, on transit plan issues and on the County General Plan Revision. We are currently working together on the City General Plan.

Various groups in the Coalition represent particular disadvantaged populations in the area, and we are eager to join forces on some of their other activities as well. One of our major commitments emanating from our July retreat was to diversify our membership and these planned activities present a unique opportunity to meet and work with members of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

We have been so impressed by the eager, brilliant, energetic and dedicated young people who make up the Coalition. One young woman is an attorney for Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability. After earning a J. D. from Boston College Law School, she worked in Peru on matters related to human rights law litigations, women's rights and rural development. She served as an attorney for California Rural Legal Assistance where she advocated for improved investment and equitable land use and planning practices in disadvantaged communities in the Central Valley.

Another young woman was born in Mexico and moved to Parlier at the age of 3. Her parents are farm workers and worked hard to put 6 children through college. Her degree from UC Santa Barbara is in Psychology and Law and Society. She returned to Parlier after college and worked with CRLA on the Community Equity Initiative, focusing on improving conditions in low-income, unincorporated communities throughout the Valley. She helped launch the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability because of her strong belief that diverse voices need to come together to identify solutions to the many issues that plague this region, while acknowledging and respecting the inherent wisdom within the communities.

Nyla

Member News

Please note changes in your roster

New Members

Adua Butticci
654 East Home
Fresno, CA 93728
485-6110
adua654@gmail.com

Susan Coberly
2658 Alluvial, Apt. 114
Fresno, 93720
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Julie A. Collura
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Kay Tolladay Pitts
2658 East Alluvial, #119
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New Address

Judith Steele
1622 Alluvial, Apt. 115
Clovis, CA 93611



This month we thank the following for their generous donations:

Stephenie Frederick

Louise Richardson

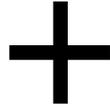
We are now a 501 (c) (3) so all dues and donations are tax deductible and also much appreciated. Make checks out to LWVF and send to

Treasurer, LWVF
1345 Bulldog Lane
Fresno, CA 93710

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Volume 73, No. 11 Editor: Francine Farber



Lunch & Learn about The County's Transit System

Featuring

Moses Stites, General Manager, FC Rural Transit Agency

John Downs, Transit Planning Manger, Fresno Area Express

Shonna Halderman, Manager, Clovis Roundup

Wednesday, December 3 * 11:30 a.m.—1 p.m.

Migrant Education Office Conference Room

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Transportation

by Stephenie Frederick



Fresno, like all cities, relies on a complex web of transportation services. Fresno has more than 58 taxicab numbers listed in its yellow pages. Because of turnover, not all of these are valid, and some are interconnected with one another. Let's say we have more than forty ways to call a cab.

When you call one of these numbers, you reach a dispatching service that connects you with a vehicle. After that, every aspect of the service relies on the law. The City of Fresno has detailed, stringent requirements for driver competence (training, drug testing, background checks), vehicle safety, insurance, and trip guarantees (standard fares, transport – directly – to any and all destinations).

All taxis in a given city charge the same fare, which is set by the city council. In Fresno, the meter starts at \$3.40. Each mile is \$2.45; each minute of wait time, \$0.45. Merced and Visalia are slightly less expensive. Prices jump up in San Francisco, where meter start is \$3.50, each mile is \$2.75, and wait time is \$0.55 (and you pay \$2.00 extra to be picked up at the airport). Fresno's Measure C gives seniors of 70 and older a 75% discount on taxi fares.

Taxi drivers must lease specially equipped vehicles from taxi companies, or equip and drive their own vehicles.

Every vehicle must have a permit, and every driver as well. All drivers must carry insurance, and all must rely on a dispatching service.

For the taxi industry to thrive, taxis must not be too numerous. The supply of taxis must fall just short of demand. Some large cities like Chicago and New York limit the number of taxi permits (medallions) they issue, but others, like Fresno, do not.

The intrusion of private-vehicle, web-based services like Uber and Lyft has angered the managers in the local taxi industry – not because Uber-like services steal away passengers but because they lure away drivers! What this means is that the "real money" to be made in the local industry does not reside in passenger fees but in what drivers pay to management for vehicle leases, dispatching, accounting services, and so on.

Across the country, traditional taxicab services have declared war on web-based, private-vehicle services. And the next time you call a taxi, think about the hidden economic and regulatory structure that place a waiting cab in front of your house.



Voter Services

by Liz Shields

Volunteers have been staffing phone banks and opening ballots for the election. The small phone bank at the Kern Street Office will continue through November 3.

On Election Day, November 4, the phone bank at the Warehouse will start at 6 am and continue until 8 pm depending on demand. Unfolding ballots will continue through November 9, again depending on the volume of vote-by-mail ballots received.

Attendance at the candidate forums was very disappointing this election period. All incumbents except Jim Costa declined to participate or did not respond. One candidate forum for Fresno Unified School District Board Area 1 was held with Cal Johnson and Christensen Flemming at CMAC. Four other candidates whose opponents declined to participate made brief taped presentations. Thanks to Bill Murphy who was the moderator and to League members who provided questions. A list of YouTube links and a broadcast schedule will be dis-

tributed to League members, local TV stations and the Fresno Bee.

Copies of Pros and Cons are available by calling me at 298-5183. Presentations on the propositions were made to six groups.

Thanks to Charlotte Pavelko at Reedley College, Ruth Afifi at Fresno Adult School and the student unit at Fresno State for registering voters during National Voter Registration in September.

Education News

by Kay Bertken



This month the Fresno Unified Board heard about the district's No Child Left Behind waiver, the middle school redesign efforts, shortcomings in the district's data dashboard and considered the Reform Fresno Unified group's request for time on the Board agenda.

The Federal Department of Education has extended the waiver it gave last year to Fresno Unified and its 6 CORE California district partners. That waiver has given the districts flexibility in the use of federal funds and release from some of the achievement test demands of the NCLB Act. In exchange, the districts have promised multiple measures of achievement and growth that address the whole child rather than a total focus on academic test scores.

Stringent reporting requirements

The districts are now obligated to report high school readiness for 8th graders, redesignation rates of English Learners, eradication of achievement disparities among student subgroups, plus a significant expansion of subgroup measures that will allow more students to be included in the data and specifically in the subgroup comparisons.

A report on the first year of the middle school redesign, initiated in the 2012-2013 school year, revealed improved experiences and expanded opportunities across the district. Previously only 35% of core academic teachers had shared time for professional learning and collaboration, now 100% do. That time has been extended from 18 hours to 96 hours per year. The number of students achieving a C or better has increased significantly in all the core areas. Attendance has improved with 2172 more students achieving attendance rates of 95% or more.

Enrollments in electives has increased from 67% to 94% of middle school students as elective choices are now more equitably distributed across district schools. There has been a 520 student increase in the number of 9th graders taking a second level foreign language course.

Academic progress data needed

Superintendent Hanson asked the Board to approve a workshop on the reform of the district's data listing of routinely monitored and tracked data. Superintendent Hanson requested that the Board discuss possible new trends that need to be tracked and some old measures that may no longer be priorities. His major expressed concern was over the current lack of academic progress measures. The State Department of Education cancelled the state testing program last year to accommodate the switch to the new core curriculum and the anticipation of new core assessments. Without those State test measures, Fresno (and other districts) do not have any method for tracking student achievement against other districts or reporting to parents how their children are faring relative to a larger population. The Board agreed to a workshop.

At the September 24 Board meeting, Tony Pings, the secretary of the Reform Fresno Unified community group, requested time on the Board agenda to discuss the concept of splitting the district. He appealed to the Board to participate in a formal proposal that might be presented to the voters. He suggested that they should help to develop the ballot measure, to which his group is devoted. At the October 15 meeting, Mr. Pings expressed disappointment at not being added to the agenda. Superintendent Hanson responded that the request had promised forthcoming documents. He stated that he was not opposed to putting the group on the agenda; he was waiting for the promised documents. Board President Valerie Davis suggested that the item wait until after the election, when new Board members could

Mental Health

by Francine Farber



The Mental Health Board's October meeting featured cultural presentations to honor the diversity in Fresno County. A Pakistani martial arts demonstration and Laotian dancers were well received, as was a presentation on the Jewish calendar and Hanukkah.

A large part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the Holistic Cultural and Education Wellness Center. This is a relatively new program under the Innovation component of the Mental Health Services Act. It is a partnership of several agencies to empower individuals and families by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate education, training and linkage services to those who may not seek traditional Western mental health services.

A board member was in agreement with the program's intent, but pointed out that he believes it is not fulfilling the promises regarding outcomes that it made to the Board of Supervisors, which gave approval to it two years ago after deliberating at four separate meetings. The defense for continuing the program acknowledged that it may not have met some of the outcome requirements but that this kind of non-traditional program is very difficult to evaluate. The evaluation component has been contracted out to Alliant University and it was recommended that they go back to the drawing board to come up with a better evaluation system with measurable outcomes. One example of the difficulty is that while traditional practitioners, such as social workers, psychologists and others, are certificated and must present appropriate credentials, alternative practitioners such as ethnic and spiritual healers do not have such credentials and need to be evaluated differently.

Although the board member proposed that these concerns be presented to the Board of Supervisors, other members did not agree and instead asked the staff from the Department of Behavioral Health to address the stated concerns and return at a future meeting, prior to the expiration of the contract in June, to inform the Board of improvements.

Groups express concerns to Council regarding General Plan update

by Mary Savala

Members of Building Healthy Communities (BHC) have been meeting with individual Council members to discuss top concerns of southeast and southwest Fresno communities in the Fresno City General Plan update. Those concerns include a change in the almost exclusive designation of Industrial zoning in those south Fresno neighborhoods, an equitable distribution of affordable housing throughout the city, and more parks and green space in those heretofore disadvantage south Fresno communities. The BHC coalition has also been urging City administration and council support for a clearer definition of the percentage of infill development required before City boundaries are expanded to allow new development. League continues to advocate for policies which promote better transit services.

LWVF will be using some of its California Endowment grant money to pay for radio ads to encourage south City and West Fresno residents to attend the Planning Commission and City Council hearings and to express their continuing concerns for lack of park and recreation space for the youth, the dumping of all dirty industry in their part of the City and the need for affordable housing throughout the City.

I thought you might be interested in my observations on the Scottish Independence vote on September 18th during our trip to Scotland. The referendum asked the question, "Should Scotland become an independent country? Prior to the election the voting age was reduced from 18 to 16 years. 95% of eligible voters were registered to vote. No Scots-born residents of other parts of the United Kingdom could vote. Voting could be done in person on Election Day or by mail or by proxy.

On Election Day there was 85% voter turnout. The ballot was a simple piece of paper with the referendum question and Yes and No boxes to be checked. Votes were hand counted. The odds makers were right. The referendum was defeated by 55% to 45% and the majority of Scots heaved a sigh of relief. Now it remains to see how the supporters and opponents will reconcile their different visions for Scotland .

-Liz Shields



The October meeting of the Fresno County ACA Stakeholders Group provided startling insights into the extent of poverty in our county. With California's expansion of Medi-Cal, 360,000 people (out of a total county population of about a million) qualify for Medi-Cal benefits. Our Department of Social Services has confronted the huge task of documenting these beneficiaries over the last year, but still faces a backlog of enrollment work. The inherent complexity and ever-evolving criteria for Medi-Cal have created a truly Sisyphean activity for county governments, and here again we get a glimpse into the huge administrative costs of the American health care system.

Highest poverty, highest Medicaid

California has the lowest Medicaid fees in the country—about 40% of private insurance rates. We also have among the highest percentage of Medicaid patients. The federal Medicaid program allows states some freedom in setting criteria for Medicaid recipients and for provider fees. Remarkably, our resource-rich state has the highest poverty rate in the land—23 per cent—when income is adjusted for cost-of-living. Our

high Medi-Cal enrollments therefore reflect the reality of poverty, not California's adoption of more liberal distribution of Medi-Cal benefits. Fees have been kept low as a perceived budgetary imperative.

The result is that Medi-Cal patients confront limited networks of providers, with a large contribution from the federally-qualified health centers (FQHC's), designated by the federal government as unique contributors to underserved patients and therefore supported by fee supplements.

More specialists needed



The majority of Fresno's Medi-Cal recipients are enrolled in commercial, Medi-Cal specific HMO's, which have been shown in nationwide studies to reduce Medicaid costs. Executives of these plans reporting at the ACA Stakeholders meetings have been surprisingly optimistic about meeting the primary care and mental health/behavioral goals set by the ACA. But the local panel of medical and surgical subspecialists servicing Medi-Cal is inadequate, and efforts by FQHC's to recruit subspecialists have been

largely thwarted by limited salary guarantees and rural settings. Los Angeles and San Francisco, in contrast, attract an oversupply of subspecialists with sufficient idle capacity to provide care to the low-paying Medi-Cal population. Many of these potential providers will accept Medi-Cal patients from California's interior, but the geographic barriers to long-term care for this population are formidable.

A panel discussion about maintaining a program for health care for unauthorized immigrants was the highlight of the ACA Stakeholders meeting. It featured our Public Health Director David Pomaville and advocates of maintaining a program of comprehensive care for our unauthorized immigrants.

In spite of ongoing negotiations with the state Department of Health Services, Community Regional Medical Center, and the regional FQHC's, our Health Department has made little progress toward formulating a sustainable healthcare benefit for undocumented workers and their families. When the Medically Indigent Services Program expires in 2015, unauthorized immigrant patients needing prompt subspecialist care will be sent to the CRMC emergency room. Patients being followed in the subspecialty clinics at CRMC (some for decades) will lose their appointments and prescriptions.

LWVF participated in the LWVUS Update Study on Agriculture. Here is a condensation of the national position. For the complete position, please consult the LWVUS website.



TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SAFETY OF OUR FOOD SUPPLY, GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Government should provide financial support for agriculture that includes disaster assistance, crop insurance, need-based loans and incentives to adopt best management practices. Support should be extended to specialty crops, to new production methods, and to farms that supply local and regional markets.
- Subsidized crop yield insurance should be linked to implementation of best management practices with the subsidy denied for marginal or environmentally sensitive land.
- League supports policies that increase competition in agricultural markets. Antitrust laws should be enforced to ensure competitive agricultural markets. Clean air and water regulations should apply to all animal and aquaculture production and processing facilities, and not just to the very large confined animal feeding operations.
- League believes government regulatory agencies dealing with animal and aquaculture production should have adequate authority and funding to 1) enforce regulations and 2) gather information that supports monitoring the impacts of all animal feeding and aquaculture operations on human and animal health and the environment.
- Government should fund basic research related to agriculture. Government funded research should also address the impact of new technologies on human health and the environment prior to widespread adoption of products developed with such technologies.
- Clarify and enforce pre-market requirements for foods and food additives developed using new chemical technology, such as genetic engineering or nanotechnology.
- Require developers to monitor all such new food products developed after releasing to the market;
- Require developers of such new food products to provide data and other materials to independent third parties for pre-and post-marketing safety assessment;
- Fund independent third party risk assessment examining how long term and multiple exposures to such new foods affect human health and the environment;
- Withdraw marketing approval and require recall if such products are shown to be unsafe;
- Require post-marketing monitoring of human health and environmental impacts for pharmaceutical application used in animal and aquaculture production;
- Limit use of antibiotics in animal production to the treatment of disease;
- Promote crop management practices that decrease dependency on added chemicals; and;
- Fund, employ and train sufficient personnel for assessment and compliance functions of regulatory agencies.

The League supports government developing and requiring more informative and standardized definitions on product labeling. Food labeling and advertising should display only approved health and safety claims and an accurate representation of the required ingredient and nutrition lists. The League supports consumer education about labeling of foods developed using any new technology.

Friant Ranch lawsuit goes to California Supreme Court

by Radley Reep

In July Friant Ranch petitioned the California Supreme Court to review the Fifth District Court of Appeal ruling that gave the League and the Sierra Club a legal victory with respect to the inadequacy of the air quality section of the Friant Ranch environmental impact report (EIR).

Last month the California Supreme Court agreed to conduct that review. As a result, the League and the Sierra Club have engaged Attorney Sara Hedgpeth-Harris to represent them before the Supreme Court. A decision is expected by summer 2015.

Friant Ranch has asserted that the California Supreme Court needs to settle three issues of law: (1) the standard of review for a court hearing a case claiming that an EIR's discussion of a topic required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is insufficient, (2) the necessity of an EIR to correlate a project's air emissions to specific health impacts and (3) the adequacy of CEQA mitigation measures.

Two days after the Supreme Court agreed to review the Fifth District ruling giving a win to the League and the Sierra Club, the County of Fresno unexpectedly published a Notice of Preparation stating that it will revise and recirculate the Air Quality and Water Supply sections of the Friant Ranch EIR.

In other words, at the same time that Friant Ranch is challenging the Fifth District's ruling (before the California Supreme Court), the County is beginning the process of revising the Friant Ranch EIR in compliance with that same court ruling.

The County held a public meeting in the town of Friant to take comments from the public as to the scope of the revision. The League has concerns about the process the County is using to revise the EIR, including whether the County...

◆ Had failed to get approval from the Board of Supervisors to proceed with the revision of the EIR

◆ Had failed to approve a contract with the EIR consulting firm

◆ Had failed to make public a County file for the revision of the EIR

◆ Had failed to identify an adverse impact requiring the reanalysis of the Water Supply section of the EIR

At the public scoping meeting the attorney for Friant Ranch explained that if the Supreme Court overturns the Fifth District ruling, the revision of the EIR will be abandoned

County documents are available on the County's website at <http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/DepartmentPage.aspx?id=4238>.



School Mental Health

(continued from page 1)

Job Melton, therapist and manager in the Fresno Unified Special Education Department, reviewed current research. Citing the district's 474 pupils receiving mental health services, he stressed the importance of keeping children in the home and the community instead of residential treatment. He also noted trends such as the need for accountability when deciding on treatment, a growing awareness of the significance of trauma and technology that allows depression to be seen in the brain.

The fourth panelist, Caine Christensen, director of Student Support Services for Fresno Unified, said this is an exciting time for social and mental health issues, noting the variety of approaches underway in the district. However, he said 87 percent of the district's 74,000 students live in poverty. Noting there were 12,000 truants in the system last year, he explained the reorganization of staff to concentrate on the sites with the highest numbers of truants, each of which has an attendance officer assigned to it.

The Lunch and Learn was part of LWVF's two-year commitment to mental health issues as a local priority.

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What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and national Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

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